THE

Laſt Judgment:

OR A

DISCOURSE

Shewing the reaſonableneſs of the Belief of ſuch a thing.

Deliver'd in a

SERMON,

At the ASSIZES held for the County of *DENBIGH*, on the 18th of *April*, *Anno* 1682.

By *JOHN OLIVER*, Chaplain to the Right Worſhipful Sir *Thomas Delves* of *Dodington* in *Cheſhire*, Baronet, and ſometime Student of *Clare-Hall* in *Cambridge*.

LONDON,

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(4). 26 p

XUM

To the Right Worſhipful

JOSHUA EDISBURY, Eſq;

High Sheriff

For the County of

DENBIGH.

SIR,

THis Sermon came abroad at laſt to teſtifie the grateful ſenſe I have of the many favours received from your ſelf, and ſome other Members of that Audience, in which it was deliver'd. And ſince it is made thus publick, it can't in juſtice be entitled to any other Perſon than your ſelf, the firſt occaſion of its being: There were ſeveral Arguments that might have diſſwaded any man in my Circumſtances from a Work of this kind (of which the unripeneſs of my years, and a natural averſion to be known in ſuch a

quarrelsome Age, where the plainnest things are become matter of Controversie, were none of the least.) And yet I reckon'd, that the Request of those worthy Persons, who were pleas'd to set such extraordinary marks of their Favour, upon one who was perfectly a Stranger to them, could not be denyed without a secret reproach of Ingratitude. I have therefore been so hardy, as to expose it a second time, and do lay it down with all submission at your Feet, beseeching you to receive it with as much Candor, as 'tis offer'd with Modesty by

Your

Most humble, and

most obliged Servant,

JOHN OLIVER.

A

SERMON

Preach'd at the Assizes held for the County of *DENBIGH.*

April 18. 1682.

2 Cor. 5. and former part of the 10th Verse.

For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ.

I Don't know any one Article of our Christian Faith, that can possibly have a more universal influence on the Lives and Actions of all men, than that which concerns a Judgment to come: And I know no time so proper to mind you of that General Assize, in which all men shall be summon'd to give Account of their doings as the present occasion. For as nothing can be of greater Force for the Government of our whole time, so nothing can more immediately conduce to regulate the particular Actions of this, than a firm Belief, that whatever passes from us here, will be entred into the most lasting and unalterable

able Regiſters, be laid up among the Archieves of Heaven, and muſt as certainly be review'd another day, and at another Bar of the moſt exact and impartial Juſtice.

In my Defence of this great Principle, I ſhall endeavour to make out theſe 3 things.

1. That the belief of a Judgment to come is ſuitable to thoſe common Notions which are imprinted on our minds: And that every ſober Perſon by reflecting on his own frame, muſt unavoidably fall under this perſwaſion.
2. That the Belief of a Judgment to come, is agreeable to that Notion men have concerning the Being and Providence of a God.
3. That this Doctrine is infinitely certain upon the grounds of Scripture, and eſpecially the Goſpel, whoſe great Priviledge it is to have brought Life and Immortality to Light.

I begin with the firſt of theſe.

Viz. 1. That the Belief of a Judgment to come is ſuitable to thoſe common Notions which are imprinted on our minds, and that every ſober Perſon by reflecting on his own Frame, muſt unavoidably fall under this Perſwaſion.

We cann't imagine, that the great Author of our Being ſhould leave any Impreſſions upon man, the moſt excellent piece of his workmanſhip here below, which ſhould

ſhould ſtand for a Cypher: Nothing could be a greater impeaching of his Wiſdom, than to have put ſuch things into our Conſtitution, as could be of no uſe or advantage to us: If there be therefore any ſuch Principles ſtamp'd upon us, as will naturally enforce the Belief of another Judgment: And if theſe Principles can proceed from nothing elſe but the Finger of the Almighty, this will be one fair Evidence, that ſuch a thing muſt certainly be.

And that there are ſuch Principles ſtamp'd upon our minds, as will naturally enforce the Belief of another Judgment, is plain from the univerſal Conſent of men in all times and places about it.

For this Doctrine of a Judgment to come, has found a general entertainment in the World: Not only amongſt the *Greeks* and *Romans*, thoſe People, by whom Learning and Arts, Policy and Government were improv'd to a conſiderable degree: But alſo amongſt the rude and barbarous Nations, where nothing of this kind can be aſſign'd as the grounds of it: There being little of Policy or Religion, or Learning or good Manners to be there met with. Whatever there was to difference theſe laſt from the more civiliz'd part of Mankind, yet in this they all agreed; the Being of a God, a future State, the diſtribution of Rewards and Puniſhments according to the Actions of men in this Life.

It muſt be granted, indeed, that the apprehenſions the Heathens had of another Life were dark and cloudy: The Rewards they imagin'd to be laid up for good men,

men, were moſtly adapted to the gratifying of the ſenſual Part, and the Puniſhments to be inflicted on evil men, were ſuch as they thought moſt ſuitable to the Crimes here committed.

They tell us, that when good men have paſs'd their Tryals, they are immediately convey'd into ſome Paradyſial place, ſome flowry Fields and Gardens, always flouriſhing and delightful, where they meet with ſuch innocent enjoyments, as they took moſt pleaſure in while here on Earth; Which (by the way) is a ſecret reflection on the looſe pretender to Chriſtianity, who reſolves to ſpend all his dayes in riot and excels, in filthineſs and debauchery, and yet hopes in the end to be poſſeſs'd of thoſe ſpiritual Pleaſures above, which are nothing akin to the Pleaſures he met with here, and if enjoy'd, could be no more ſatisfaction to him, than it would be to a Swine to have his Stye built of Cedar, his Bed perfum'd, and his Meat ſerv'd him in Plate.

As for the wicked, they tell us, the Portion of ſuch is to be caſt into black and diſmal Priſons, to be tormented by Haggs and Furies, and to meet with ſuch other Puniſhments, as the nature and weight of their Crimes deſerved.

And however, this Account be infinitely ſhort of what the Scripture affords, concerning the different Conditions of men in another World, yet it argues a ſtrong perſwaſion even amongſt Infidels of a future State, and that ſuch a thing was acknowledg'd by them,

them, though the Nature and Circumſtances of it could not be made out, without the aſſiſtance of a ſupernatural Light.

If it be ſaid, that there is no ſuch univerſal conſent as is here pretended, becauſe ſome few Perſons Atheiſtically inclin'd, have now and then diſown'd the Opinion; it's eaſily anſwer'd, that two or three ſuch Inſtances can be no prejudice to the General Judgment of moſt men, both learned and unlearned: That it has been their Intereſt, there ſhould be no ſuch thing as a Judgment to come, and therefore they have rack'd their Brains to find out Arguments againſt it: That the impurity of their Lives has ſullied their Reaſons, and debauch'd their underſtandings, and rendred them as uncapable of judging what belongs to the humane Nature, as a man born blind is to read a Lecture about Colours, or a Perſon with a diſtemper'd Palate to diſtinguiſh meats.

But now to what Cauſe ſhall we aſſign this univerſal Agreement? How comes it about, that the moſt diſtant People of the World, that live under different Models of Government, and diſtinct Rites of Worſhip; that have peculiar Cuſtoms and Manners, and Inclinations, ſhould all joyn in this, that there is an Account to be given in another World, of all our Actions done in this? Beſides, how comes this Principle to ſtand ſo fix'd and unſhaken, conſidering the infinite changes which almoſt every thing elſe has undergone, and the many attempts which have been made to alter this by a ſort of men, that

would confound the Diſtinction betwixt Vertue and Vice here, that there might be no ſuch thing as either Heaven or Hell hereafter? We ſee daily, that other Opinions riſe and fall, according as the grounds they are built upon appear ſtronger or weaker; and ſometimes they have more, ſometimes fewer Defendants to own and countenance them: But this Doctrine of a Judgment to come, as it is of equal Antiquity, and has the ſame extent with Mankind, ſo is it conſtantly the ſame: Tract of Time, and revolution of Ages, and deeper inſight into the nature of things; the ſeveral changes that have happened in the Laws, the Religions, the Cuſtoms of any People, have not been able to abate any thing of its Authority, but ſtill as the World grows older and more changeable, this grows more ſtrong, vigorous and conſtant.

It muſt then have ſome cauſe like it ſelf, it muſt be reſolv'd into ſome ſuch impreſſions as are common to Mankind, which every man carries about him, and from which he may argue himſelf into a belief of it.

I am eaſily induc'd to think, that as the main Body of the Heathen Theology, was but the old Traditional Religion corrupted by a long and tedious deſcent, (as all things are apt to loſe of their native Purity the farther they go) ſo this Account of a future Judgment amongſt the Heathens might be a branch of it, mixt with the fancies and inventions of men, till the firſt Patriarchal Creed became a meer

meer Poetical Story. But yet I think it will be hard to perſwade any man that a Doctrine of this kind, ſo oppoſite to mens worldly Intereſts, ſo apt to controul their Luſts and Paſſions, ſhould ſpread ſo far, and prevail ſo generally, were there not ſome more early impreſſion left upon us, to make room in our underſtandings for it, ſome natural notions, that amidſt all viciſſitudes of the World would be ſure to uphold the truth of it: I inſtance in theſe three.

1. That apprehenſion which all men have concerning good and evil.
2. That ſecret joy which good men find upon the doing any vertuous act: And that confidence they have when they ſuffer upon the ſcore of Piety and Religion.
3. Thoſe horrible Fears and Confuſions, which bad men find upon the doing an ill act.

Theſe are natural to us as men, and fair Evidences of what I have undertook to make out.

1. That apprehenſion which all men have concerning good and evil, argues a future Judgment.

That ſome actions are Vertuous and Honourable, and the contrary baſe and vitious, and that Antecedently to any humane Law or poſitive Cuſtom for the making them ſo, is the common voice of mankind: To be innocent in our Converſations, grateful to our Benefactors, upright in our Dealings, true to our Vows and Promiſes, Oaths and Contracts, theſe

are ſuch things, as would be excellent and approved of all, though there were no humane Laws to enjoyn and encourage the practice of them: And on the other hand the oppoſite Vices are ſo deform'd and ugly, that ſhould all the Law-givers on earth conſpire to change the Scene, to make Vertue Vice, and Evil Good, the undertaking would be as ſtrange as unſuccesful: Such attempts could never obtain their end, unleſs they could mould the man over again, and infuſe into him quite different Principles, from what he has already.

And though men are ſo far willing to comply with their temporal Intereſts, as to contradict in the Practick, what they are content to own in the Speculative; yet there are not many arrived to that pitch of Prophaneneſs, but would appear in the World under another Character, than what they really deſerve: Which argues at leaſt in the worſt of men a ſecret allowance, that Virtue has ſomething in it more ſuitable to the honour of the humane Nature, and that Vice has that intrinſick uglineſs in it, that we bluſh at and are aſham'd to own.

Now the goodneſs of every Action conſiſting in a conformity to its proper Rule, and the badneſs of any Act in a deflection from it: It will follow, that there is a Rule ſtamp'd upon the mind of every man, according to which he judges one Act good, and another evil; and that Judgment about good and evil being one and the ſame in all Parts of the World, the Rule muſt be ſo too, and conſequently, have the ſame

ſame Author which our very Being has, the all-wiſe God: This is that Rule the *Roman* Orator ſtyl'd, *Non ſcripta lex ſed nata*, a Law not written on Tables of Stone or Braſs, but engraven on the Heart and Conſcience of man, agreeable to St. *Paul*'s Character of the Gentiles, which having not the Law, are a Law to themſelves, and do ſhew the work of the Law written in their Hearts, their Conſciences alſo bearing Witneſs, and their thoughts the mean while accuſing or excuſing one another. *Rom.* 2. 14, 15.

'Twill alſo follow, that the great Author of this Law muſt have reſerv'd ſome Rewards and Puniſhments to ſecure mens obedience to it: It being below the wiſdom of any temporal Prince, to ſend his Statutes and Decrees abroad without ſuch Motives to enforce their obſervance: And if theſe Rewards and Puniſhments are not immediately diſpens'd (as I ſhall after ſhew) there muſt be another time ſet apart for that work of Juſtice.

2. That ſecret joy, which good men find upon the doing a vertuous Act, is a kind of earneſt and anticipation of a future Reward; and that confidence they have when they ſuffer upon the Score of Piety and Religion, argues an expectation of it. Let the good man reflect upon the frame of his mind, when he has been doing his duty, and hee'l find every thing there calm and peaceable.

There is ſomething within him, that whiſpers the ſoft Eulogies, of a well done good and faithful Ser-

vant,

vant, and entitles him to the Approbation of his great Master.

Beſides, when he ſuffers upon the account of doing well, what is it, that bears up his Spirit, but an aſſurance, that he ſuffers in a good Cauſe, and a reaſonable hope, that he ſhall be rewarded for it? This was the true Foundation of that undaunted Courage, with which the firſt Chriſtians outbrav'd the Malice of their bloodieſt Perſecutors. This was it that made ſo many Champions for Religion, both before and under the Law, of whoſe Sufferings the Author to the *Hebrews* gives us this Catalogue: They had Tryals of cruel Mockings and Scourgings, yea, moreover of Bonds and Impriſonments: They were Stoned, they were Sawn aſunder, were tempted, were ſlain with the Sword; they wandred about in Sheep-skins and Goat-skins, being deſtitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the World was not worthy) they wandred in Deſarts and Mountains, in Dens and Caves of the Earth: And under all theſe the great encouragement was the Recompence of the Reward.

Heb. 11. 36, 37, 38.

V. 26.

But perhaps theſe are Inſtances, that won't be allow'd me here, and the Courage of theſe men will be reſolv'd, not into any natural expectance of a future Reward, but into ſome ſpecial Promiſe and ſupernatural Revelation: If ſo, there are memorable Examples of this kind to be found, even amongſt Heathens themſelves.

To inſtance in one for all, the excellent *Socrates*, who ſuffer'd upon a fundamental Point, the Unity of God; with how much bravery of Spirit did he demean

Plato in Phad.

mean himſelf, and what admirable Diſcourſes dropp'd from him during his Impriſonment? And laſtly, with how much boldneſs did he look the ghaſtly Meſſenger in the face? And what was his ſupport? Νῦν δὲ εὖ ἴστε ὅτι παρ' ἄνδρας τε ἐλπίζω ἀφίξασθαι ἀγαθούς: He encourag'd himſelf in hopes of going into another World, where he ſhould meet with better Company than any was upon Earth: And though his aſſurances of it were none of the beſt, καὶ τοῦτο μὲν οὐκ ἂν πάνυ διϊσχυρισαίμην, yet they were ſuch as bore up all that load, that was charg'd upon them.

But then,

3. What Account can be given of that great uneaſineſs of mind, which waits upon the Commiſſion of a groſs ſin eſpecially, though never ſo private? How comes the man to be ſo ſtrangely alter'd on the ſudden? His Colour changes, his Blood retires, his Spirits flagg, his Tongue falters, his Joynts tremble, his Pulſe grows uncertain, fear, aſtoniſhment, and deſpair hang upon his Brow: And all this is but the outward Scene and Repreſentation of what's acted within: There's a Court of Judicature erected, the guilty Perſon's arreſted by his own thoughts, and ſummon'd to the Bar: Arraign'd, Convicted, Condemn'd, and only Repriev'd for a more ſolemn Trial at the great day: Though he walk abroad, hee's but a more enlarged ſort of Priſoner, the Guards of Conſcience attend him in all places, and 'tis as impoſſible for him to make his eſcape from them as to flee from himſelf: And now what's the meaning of all this? Only the man's bound over to ſome other Tribunal to anſwer for thoſe Actions which

which the Temporal [illegible]s here take no notice of.

If it be ſaid, that theſe fears are only the Fruits of bad education, and ſome unſound Principles inſtill'd into our tender Age; How comes it about, that thoſe Perſons, who pretend to the greateſt ſhare of knowledg, who dare undertake to argue down the Belief of a God and Providence, and a future State, have not been able by all their endeavours to raze out theſe Notions, and to conquer the fears ariſing from them? We ſee it's an ordinary thing for men upon due Experience, and better Information, to throw off thoſe Opinions, which were forc'd upon them in their Infancy. But this of a Judgment to come, ſticks cloſer to a man than his skin; the Atheiſt himſelf cannot be rid on't, though he tries all wayes to baffle his Conſcience, and extinguiſh his natural Sentiments about it: And (if we may believe the credible Reports of former times) no men in the World have been more aſſaulted with the fears of another Life, than they who pretend to render that and every thing elſe in Religion, the Subjects of their Mirth and Drollery. This was the caſe of *Epicurus*, who when he had baniſh'd (as he thought) a Providence out of the World, yet he could not by all his Arguments baniſh a Conſcience out of himſelf; that was reſolv'd to keep home, and to puniſh the Offender for his other bold and impious undertakings.

But perhaps the fear, that waits upon the Commiſſion of ſome Acts, relates only to temporal Puniſhments, and the Sword of the Secular Power: It may be, that's it which puts the man out of order; if ſo, how comes it about, that ſuch Acts of Impiety as

as are not punishable in any Civil Court, and such as are done with that secrecy, as not to fall under publick Cognizance should have the same effect? Or whence it is, that those Persons which are too big for the Law, should be as much tormented with the fears of this kind, as any that are within the verge of it? Kings and Emperors have been under this Discipline, if there be any truth in Sacred or Prophane Authors. This was the case of *Belshazzar* even in the height of his jollity, while the Hand was writing his doom upon the Wall, his Conscience was reading over the Indictment within; and then no wonder if his Countenance was changed, and his Thoughts troubled him; if his Joynts were loos'd, and his Knees smote against each other. Thus it far'd likewise with the *Roman* Governour, while St. *Paul* reason'd of Righteousness, Temperance, and Judgment to come: was it strange that *Felix* should tremble at the latter part of the Sermon, who knew himself so defective in all the rest? After the Historian had taken notice of that odd Epistle, *Tiberius* the Emperor wrote to the Senate; He adds by way of remark, that if the Breasts of Tyrants could be look'd into, there would be found there, *Laniatus & Ictus*, the wounds of a disorder'd Spirit.

Dan. 5. 3, 6.

Act. 24. 25.

Tacit. Annal. lib. 6. Quid scribam vobis Patres Conscripti, aut quomodo scribam, aut quid omnino non scribam hoc tempore, dii me deæq; pejus perdant, quam quotidie pereo sentio, si scio ubi de hâc re plura.

And the Author of the Lives of the *Cæsars*, in his account of *Caligula* could observe, that he who was so great a Contemner of the Divine Power, was glad upon every thunderclap to take Sanctuary under

Sutton. in vitâ Calig. Parag. 5.

der his Bed : His Courage then fail'd him, when the Arrows of the Almighty went abroad : And the ſenſe of his guilt made him apt to think that himſelf was the Perſon that was aim'd at : 'Twere needleſs to reckon up more Examples of this kind, ſince we have reaſon enough to believe, that there has not been one Atheiſt in the World, but one time or other has been aſſaulted by that clamorous thing within; and eſpecially at the approaches of his dying hour, when his Conſcience has ſet all his ſins in order before him, and put him in mind of that Wiſe, Powerful, and Juſt God, before whom he is ſummon'd to appear.

It has been well obſerved, that the hopes and fears, I am now ſpeaking of, are not to be found in any other Creature here below beſides man. The Brutes have no ſad preſages, no encouraging aſſurances of another Life, becauſe wholly unconcern'd in the Retributions of it : Man is the only thing in this lower World that's affected with them, and there is no man, that's free from them : Which is a ſtrong Evidence to me, that the Author of our Being has left theſe impreſſions upon us, and that on purpoſe to guide us by them to the knowledge of a future State.

For it cannot be, that a God of infinite Wiſdom ſhould put any thing into our frame, which ſhould ſtand for nothing : Or that a God of infinite Goodneſs ſhould fix any Principles there, that were perfect Cheats and Deluſions, which he muſt have done,

if

if there be nothing in another World to verifie thoſe hopes and fears, which all men whatſoever are lyable to in this.

To conclude this Argument. Seeing this Doctrine has been univerſally receiv'd by men in all Ages and in all parts of the World; and whatever hath ſo, may well be thought to have ſome Foundation at leaſt in the very nature of man: Seeing there are ſuch Notions there, as will diſpoſe any man in the right uſe of his Faculties, to the belief of an after-reckoning: Seeing theſe cann't in reaſon be imagin'd to have any other Cauſe, than what our Being has, the Maker of all things: ſince it could not conſiſt with his Wiſdom or Goodneſs, to leave us under the Conduct of any vain, uſeleſs, or deluſory Principles, it muſt follow, that theſe are certain Intimations of a Judgment to come, engraven upon the mind of every man, that the very Heathens might have ſome notice of it, and be left inexcuſable, if their Lives and Actions were not govern'd according to the belief of it.

2. My ſecond Argument for the proof of a future Judgment, is drawn from the Notion of a God and Providence.

He that has but ſo much Religion left him, as to own the firſt Articles of his Creed, may be able with very little Logick, to argue himſelf into a Belief of this great Truth.

God being the Fountain of all poſſible Perfections, theſe things muſt be included in the Notion of him : Infinite Knowledge : Exact Juſtice : Irreſiſtible Power : To which if we add the uſual Methods of his Providence, relating to good and evil men in this Life, we ſhall then have a full demonſtration of this Principle, that there is another time to be expected, when all men ſhall receive according to their doings.

1. As to his Knowledge, we are ſure it cann't be other than infinite : Any thing leſs than that would be ſo far from being a Perfection, that it would be a real blemiſh, and diſparagement to the Divine Nature : And if infinite, then (as to what concerns our preſent enquiry) it muſt extend to the Perſons of all men, from the beginning to the end of the World ; and to all the Actions of all men, not only ſuch as are more open and publick, but ſuch alſo as are more ſecret and reſerv'd. Whatever Arts are made uſe of by us to conceal our faults from the Knowledg of man, 'tis impoſſible, that they ſhould have the ſame effect upon God, whoſe all-ſeeing Eye pierceth through the faireſt Veils and cloſeſt Diſguiſes of Hypocriſie : From which it will follow, that all thoſe Acts of ſin, which ſcape the Cenſure of the Magiſtrate, becauſe either not within his Sphere (as all internal acts of the mind) or done with that ſecrecy, that there's no Evidence of them, muſt unavoidably fall under the notice and obſervation of God.

2. As

2. As to his Juſtice: We cann't frame ſuch a notion of an infinite Juſtice, as to think, that it will either juſtifie the Wicked, or condemn the Righteous. Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right? was a Queſtion, that carried its own Anſwer along with it, and would as ſoon have been reſolv'd by a ſober Heathen, as a Patriarch.

We cann't think, that the great Law-giver ſhould be ſo much of *Epicurus*'s mind, as never to caſt an eye upon his Creatures below, or if he did, be only an idle ſpectator of what's done here. We cann't think, that he ſhould have no concern for thoſe Laws he has given us, or look down with as much favour on them that defie his Authority, and trample upon his Commands, as on them that are careful to preſerve a due regard to both. Rewards and Puniſhments are the uſual Sanctions of all Laws: And then ſure thoſe that proceed from the higheſt Authority in the World, and are of greateſt conſequence to the Peace and Welfare of mankind (as the Laws of God certainly are) muſt have the ſtrongeſt Motives to bind them upon us: The offer of the greateſt Reward to the Obedient; and the threatning of the ſevereſt Penalty to the ſtubborn; that Religion may be our Intereſt as well as Duty, and Vice the contradiction of both. And we may be further aſſur'd, that ſuch Rewards and Puniſhments will one time or other be apportion'd to the Actions of all men, ſeeing they are in the hands of the moſt exact Juſtice to diſpenſe them. 'Twere below an infinite Wiſdom, to make Laws without ſuch enforcements,

forcements, and repugnant to his Juſtice, not to execute them.

3. As to his Power: If that be equal with his Knowledg and Juſtice, as certainly it is, can he want Methods to reward the Righteous, or puniſh the Wicked? Whatever ſtrength there is in the Creatures, 'tis but a Derivation from him as the Fountain, and 'tis under his Government, as all other things, and directed to ſuch ends as he thinks fit. The Angels are but λειτουργικὰ πνεύματα, Spirits that miniſter to his Will as well as our wants, and all inferior Beings can have no more honourable an employment, than to be ſent on his Errand; and if theſe are at his beck, he cann't want either Inſtruments of Wrath to avenge himſelf on the Wicked, or wayes of mercy for the recompence of the good.

But now if we conſider the uſual Courſe of his Providence, we cann't ſay, that Rewards and Puniſhments are exactly ſuited to mens actions here: Temporal Happineſs is not always the Portion of thoſe that reverence a Deity, nor are Temporal Judgments the certain Fate of ſuch as contemn it: 'Tis true, there have been in all Ages ſome extraordinary inſtances of a Divine Vengeance purſuing the Wicked, and as remarkable Examples of the worldly ſucceſs and proſperity of good men, God having been pleas'd by theſe wayes, to give ſufficient Teſtimony of an over ruling Providence in all the Centuries of the World: And yet perhaps theſe Inſtances are but rare, to what might be produc'd to the

the contrary. How often do we ſee Meekneſs oppreſs'd, and Innocence ſlander'd, and Vertue trampled in the duſt, while Pride, Ambition and Tyranny have been lifted up to the higheſt Pinacles of Honour? As if Satan had clear'd his pretended Claim to all the Kingdoms of the Earth, and the Glory of all ſublunary things, and none were to be advanc'd there but his own Favourites. How often do we ſee the unjuſt and the fraudulent to riſe upon the Ruins of the honeſt plain-dealing man, as if that famous Maxime, which has done more miſchief in the World, than any other Poſition beſides, concerning Dominion being founded in Grace, were perfectly turn'd the other way, and wickedneſs were the only ſupport of a good Title? Good men are no more exempt from the common miſeries of humane Life, than they are from death it ſelf, the cloſe of all: Nay there are ſome Caſes, wherein theſe are the only Sufferers, witneſs the Primitive times, when to be Atheiſt or Idolater, a worſhipper of falſe Gods, or none at all, was Protection enough againſt the force of the Laws, but to be a Chriſtian was ſuch a Crime, as all the murdering Engines Hell could invent, or the malice of a perſecuting Age could ſet on work, were not ſevere enough to puniſh.

Theſe are ſome of the Objections that puzled the Heathens, and upon this ſcore the Belief of a Providence ſuffer'd ſo much in the World, ſome utterly denying it, others allowing it under various Reflections, though the wiſeſt of them inclin'd to the ſafeſt ſide: And no wonder, ſince the Royal Prophet him-

himſelf was offended at it. After he had obſerv'd, that the Proud, the Violent, the Atheiſt and the Blaſphemer were the thriving men, he was juſt reeling into Infidelity: *Verily I have cleanſed my heart in vain, and waſhed my hands in innocency, for all the day long have I been plagued, and chaſtened every morning.*

Pſ. 73. 13, 14.

But whatever impreſſions the uncertainty of Gods Proceedings here might make upon the Spirits of ſome men, 'tis an undeniable Evidence of a Judgment to come: For if there be a Supreme Power preſiding over all things, and that Power be furniſh'd with infinite Knowledg, and ſo in a condition to obſerve the Actions of all men good and bad, with infinite Juſtice, and ſo reſolv'd to render to all according to their doings, with infinite ſtrength, and ſo fitted for the Execution of that Juſtice, it muſt follow, that Vertue will certainly be rewarded, and Vice as certainly puniſh'd; and if that be not exactly done here, 'twill alſo follow, that there is another time appointed to review the Lives and Actions of all men, and to give them an anſwerable Recompence; to vindicate the Honour of Gods Juſtice and Providence, and to make all men ſee, that to be Religious, was to be wiſe; to be Atheiſtical and Prophane, the greateſt madneſs in the World.

If it be ſaid, that Vertue is its own Reward, and Vice its own Puniſhment, in reſpect of that Peace of Conſcience which follows the one, and that ſtinging remorſe which attends the other, and conſequently

quently that there is no need of a future reckoning for the Vindication of Divine Providence: I anſwer, That notwithſtanding theſe moral advantages or diſadvantages enſuing upon mens actions, there is ſome Phyſical good and evil to be expected from all Law-givers, without which they could not be juſt: Would it be a ſufficient diſcharge of a Governors Duty, to let the blackeſt Crimes go unpuniſhed, becauſe the Actors of them have been already tormented by ſome revengeful guilt? Or to ſuffer his beſt Subjects to lye under the moſt unjuſt Oppreſſions, becauſe they feel within themſelves the happy Teſtimonies of their own innocence? Beſides, what reward is there to him, who offers his Life a Sacrifice for his Religion, ſuppoſing no future State? Is the pleaſure of Martyrdom ſo great, to outweigh the pain of it? Is there any thing ſo deſirable in Racks and Priſons, the Croſs and the Flames, to make a ſober man quit all his Intereſts in the purſuit of? If we had only hopes in this Life, were not we Chriſtians of all men the moſt miſerable? And what Puniſhment is there to him, who has by a conſtant Cuſtom of ſinning, ſo baffled his Conſcience, that like diſoblig'd Friend it grows weary of rebuking him, and ſuffers him to follow his own Inclinations without any check? Add to this, that the ſatisfaction ariſing from doing good, and the regret which follows the contrary, are not ſufficient Motives to keep men within due bounds, and therefore could never be intended by the great Law-giver, as the whole of that Recompence which good and bad men are to expect from him: Were there no other induce-

ments here below, to ſecure Obedience to humane Laws, and to preſerve a due Reverence to the Authors of them, Princes would be but the more glittering pieces of State-Pageantry, and their Laws as empty as the Breath that uttered them: No man would think himſelf any farther oblig'd to obey, than than Obedience could be reconcil'd to his Intereſt; Nor would the Divine Laws ſpeed much better: Theſe would be ſlighted as much as the other, notwithſtanding the greater Majeſty of their Author, whenſoever mens worldly Advantages might tempt them to it: There muſt be therefore ſome greater incitement to Vertue, than Peace of mind, and ſome ſtronger diſcouragement to Vice than the diſquiet of it: There muſt be a far more exceeding weight of glory to draw down the Ballance againſt all the hardſhips good men meet with upon the ſcore of Religion: And ſome more intolerable load of miſery to keep bad men in awe, and innocent, though againſt their wills. And if theſe are not diſpens'd here, there muſt be another day for that work, a day, wherein we muſt all appear before the Judgment Seat of Chriſt; which brings me to the laſt thing, *viz.*

3. That this Doctrine is infinitely certain upon the grounds of Scripture, and eſpecially, the Goſpel, whoſe great Priviledge it is, to have brought Life and Immortality to Light: This is the great Inſtrument of our Belief; moral Arguments may make it reaſonable, this makes it our duty to aſſent, and turns humane Perſwaſion into Divine Faith: Here

Here we ſhall find the ſolemn Aſſize of the great Day painted to the Life, and all neceſſary Circumſtances relating to it punctually ſet down. Time and Place, indeed, God has reſerved as ſecrets to himſelf, becauſe not ſo fit for us to be acquainted with, and ſo has barr'd us out from all nice and curious ſpeculations about them, but every thing elſe is allow'd us.

Would you know the Preparations leading to that great appearance of Men and Angels? They are infinitely beyond all Pomp and Ceremony on Earth: For the Sun ſhall be darkned, and the Moon *Matth.* 24. 29. ſhall not give her Light, and the Stars ſhall fall from Heaven, and the Powers of the Heavens ſhall be ſhaken: And the Angels ſhall be ſent abroad, *v.* 31. with the great noiſe of a Trumpet, to ſummon all men to their laſt Reckoning.

Would you know the Perſon of the Judge? 'Tis that Son of man, to whom the Father has commit- *Act.* 17. 31. ted all Judgment: A Perſon of that Wiſdom, that he ſees into the Merits of every Cauſe; of that Juſtice, that he cann't determine wrongfully; and of that Authority, that from his Sentence there lyes no appeal.

Would you know the Perſons that are to appear before him? They are the Quick and Dead, all that ſhall be found alive upon Earth at his coming, and all that ſhall be cloyſter'd up in the dark Regions of the Grave: At the great Goal-delivery, the Sea *Rev.* 20. 13.

ſhall render up the dead that are in it, and Death and Hell ſhall bring their Priſoners to the Bar, that they may all receive according to their doings.

Would you know the Proceedings of that Court? They'l be according to Law, the natural Law written in our Hearts, and thoſe Poſitive Laws, the Scripture has ſuperadded to them.

Rev. 20. 12. Would you know the Evidence to be produc'd upon every man? 'Tis the Teſtimony of Conſcience, which keeps a perfect Diurnal of our ſeveral Actions, from the beginning to the end of our dayes: An Evidence, we have no reaſon to except againſt, becauſe part of our ſelves, and ſo will never give in a wrong or partial Information: An Evidence, the Judge will never queſtion, becauſe 'tis his Miniſter in every one of us, one part of whoſe Office it is to keep a true Record of all our doings.

Mat. 25 46. Would you know the Concluſion of all? The Righteous ſhall go into Life Eternal, where they cann't fail of the moſt raviſhing Delights, being poſſeſs'd of him, in whoſe preſence are Joyes, and at whoſe right hand are Pleaſures, and that for evermore: The wicked ſhall go into a place of Torment provided for the Devil and his Angels, where the Atheiſt will meet with late and ſad aſſurances of a Divine Power and Juſtice; the Blaſphemer will find what it is to affront the Author of his Being; the Prophane and Diſſolute will ſee, what an unhappy choice they made, when they left the rugged wayes

wayes of Vertue, and pitch'd upon the broad Paths of Sin, pleaſant indeed to the Eye, and eaſie to the Traveller, but ending at laſt in a Precipice of unavoidable ruine.

Knowing therefore the Terrors of the Lord, let me perſwade all that hear me this day, ſo to live, that they may be thought worthy to eſcape them: Whether Perſons in Authority, that they remembring whoſe Miniſters they are, and to whom they are accountable for that Power entruſted to them, may be careful to employ it to the Puniſhment of Wickedneſs and Vice, and to the maintenance of true Religion and Vertue: Or other ſubordinate Perſons, that they having alwayes before their Eyes the great Account, may endeavour to live in a due Reverence to the Majeſty on High, and a quiet ſubjection to his Vicegerent on Earth, and in common honeſty among themſelves.

In a word, that we may all of us, both in Church and State act ſuitable to the Rules of our holy Profeſſion, to the many weighty Obligations our Religion has laid upon us, and eſpecially to the Belief of this great Article

Article of a Judgment to come, that ſo we may finiſh our Courſe with joy, and then receive the Fruit of our doings, even a Crown of Glory.

God of his infinite mercy grant, for his Sons ſake Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, to whom with the Father and the bleſſed Spirit be all Honour and Glory, World without end.

FINIS.

XUM